

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE
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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y/LAST 12 PARAGRAPHS OF TEXT OMITTED
FOR CARTER FROM S/PRS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS)

SUBJECT: EXTRACTS FROM POWELL BRIEFING FEBRUARY 18 ON
PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO SAKHAROV
NO. 20

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FOLLOWING ARE EXTRACTS OF RELEVANT PORTIONS OF WHITE HOUSE
BRIEFING FEBRUARY 18 ON PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO SAKHAROV:

Q: JODY, DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS ON THE COMPLAINT BY
TASS TODAY, ABOUT THE AMERICAN POSITION ON THE CIVIL RIGHTS
OF SAKHAROV?

POWELL: I THINK THE STATE DEPARTMENT IS COMMENTING ON THE TASS SITUATION.

ON THE GENERAL QUESTION OF THIS MATTER, AND PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO THE SAKHAROV LETTER, I THINK THERE ARE A FEW POINTS THAT MIGHT BE WORTH NOTING.

FIRST OF ALL, THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS RESPONDING TO A LETTER FROM A NOBEL PRIZE WINNER; THAT HE WAS NOT ATTEMPTING TO CHALLENGE THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOVIET UNION BUT RATHER TO ACT AS THE DULY ELECTED SPOKESMAN FOR THE AMERICAN PEOPLE IN WHAT HE PERCEIVES AND, I BELIEVE CORRECTLY, BELIEVES TO

BE THEIR WISHES IN THIS MATTER.

I THINK IT IS ALSO WORTH NOTING THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS IN THE PAST EXERCISED THEIR RIGHT TO COMMENT ON DOMESTIC DIFFERENCES WITHIN OUR OWN COUNTRY. YOU MAY REMEMBER THAT PRAVDA EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR ANGELA DAVIS DURING THE COURSE OF THAT TRIAL, THAT GENERAL SECRETARY BREZHNEV MET PUBLICLY WITH THE LEADER OF THE AMERICAN COMMUNIST PARTY, GUS HALL, WHEN HE VISITED THE UNITED STATES. AND I THINK ALL OF US KNOW THAT RADIO MOSCOW FREQUENTLY COMMENTS ON AMERICAN DOMESTIC EVENTS.

YOU MAY ALSO REMEMBER VERY RECENTLY THAT CHILEAN COMMUNIST PARTY LEADER LUIS CORVALON WAS EXCHANGED FOR MR. BUKOVSKY, AND THAT MR. CORVALON WENT TO MOSCOW. HE MET PUBLICLY .HERE WITH GENERAL SECRETARY BREZHNEV; THAT IN FACT THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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APPEARANCE WAS ONE OF THE PUBLIC HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 70TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY.

I THINK IT ALSO SHOULD BE POINTED OUT THAT THERE IS A LEGAL BASIS FOR OUR EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN IN THE HELSINKI AGREEMENT. AND WE HAVE RELATED OUR COMMENTS TO THAT AGREEMENT.

I THINK IT IS ALSO PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THE PROBLEM OF ENSURING COMPLIANCE WITH THIS AGREEMENT AND THE MAXIMUM DEGREE OF INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM AND LIBERTY IS ONE THAT ADDRESSES ITSELF TO THIS COUNTRY AND OUR INTERNAL AFFAIRS AS IT DOES TO OTHER NATIONS.

IN RECOGNITION OF THAT FACT, THE PRESIDENT THIS WEEK ASKED FOR A REVIEW OF ACTIONS AND POLICIES OF THIS GOVERNMENT WHICH MAY BE IN CONFLICT WITH THAT AGREEMENT. THAT REVIEW IS PROCEEDING.

Q: WHO IS DOING IT?

MR. POWELL: I CAN'T GIVE YOU THAT. I WILL RECESS HERE IN A FEW MINUTES AND GIVE YOU THE DETAILS OR AS MUCH DETAIL AS I CAN ON IT. BUT I KNOW PEOPLE IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT ARE INVOLVED IN IT, OBVIOUSLY. I KNOW THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE IS INVOLVED IN IT AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT OTHER AGENCIES MAY BE INVOLVED. I BELIEVE IT IS PRIMARILY UNDER THEIR AUSPICES.

THAT PROCESS HAS ALREADY BEEN THE SUBJECT OF AT LEAST ONE NEWS ARTICLE WHICH YOU SAW THIS MORNING. I BELIEVE IT WAS A UPI STORY.

MR. SCHECTER: AP STORY.

MR. POWELL: I BEG YOUR PARDON, AN ASSOCIATED PRESS STORY
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IN THE POST THIS MORNING, REFLECTING A REVIEW OF THE STATUTES RESTRICTING THE ENTRY OF COMMUNISTS INTO THIS COUNTRY.

LET ME ADD IN THIS GENERAL REGARD THAT IT IS THE FEELING OF THIS ADMINISTRATION THAT THIS STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS IS LONG AND DIFFICULT, THAT IT PRECEDED THE CREATION OF THIS COUNTRY, AND WILL NO DOUBT CONTINUE LONG AFTER THIS ADMINISTRATION AND THOSE WHO SERVE IN IT ARE GONE. IT IS OUR BELIEF THAT IT MUST BE PURSUED BY A VARIETY OF METHODS, BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE.

I MIGHT ADD THAT DECISIONS ON HOW TO PURSUE THAT EFFORT IN INDIVIDUAL CASES HAVE TO BE MADE ON THE FACTS AS CAN BE BEST JUDGED AT THE TIME.

FINALLY, I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT IT IS OUR BELIEF THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO WORK WITH ANY GOVERNMENT TO REDUCE THE CHANCES OF WAR AND NUCLEAR HOLOCAUSTS, AND TO PROMOTE OTHER COMMON INTERESTS WITHOUT SACRIFICING THE COMMITMENT OF OUR PEOPLE AND THIS COUNTRY TO THE STRUGGLE FOR INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM.

WE WELL UNDERSTAND THAT WE CAN'T DO EVERYTHING. WE WELL UNDERSTAND THAT WE CANNOT WORK MIRACLES. BUT WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT WE CANNOT AFFORD TO FAIL TO DO WHAT WE CAN DO.

Q: CAN I FOLLOW UP ON THAT? TASS, OF COURSE, MAKES THE POINT, ALLEGES THAT THE PRESIDENT'S POSITION ON CIVIL RIGHTS, AS IT RELATES TO SOVIET DISSIDENTS, IS STRAINING DETENTE. I THINK IT SAID SOMETHING TO THE EFFECT THAT

DETENTE IS GOING TO BE MUCH MORE DIFFICULT. YOUR STATEMENT APPEARS TO HOLD A CONTRARY VIEW. IS THAT CORRECT?

MR. POWELL: WELL, IT IS CERTAINLY--I WILL REFER YOU TO THAT PARAGRAPH IN THE STATEMENT.
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Q: HAVE YOU SAID YET--MAYBE YOU HAVE--WHETHER THE PRESIDENT CONSULTED WITH ANYONE ELSE BEFORE HE WROTE THIS LETTER OR DID HE WRITE IT AND THEN NOTIFY THE GOVERNMENT?

MR. POWELL: YES, THE WRITING OF THIS LETTER AND ITS TRANSMITTAL WAS THE PRODUCT OF CONSULTATION BOTH WITH THE NSC HERE AND WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, AND WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

Q: HAVE YOU SAID THAT BEFORE, OR IS THAT THE FIRST TIME YOU HAVE SAID IT?

MR. POWELL: NOT FROM THIS PODIUM.

Q: IN OTHER WORDS, THIS WAS NOT JUST SOMETHING HE DID. HE CONSULTED WITH A NUMBER OF PEOPLE BEFORE HE DID IT?

MR. POWELL: THAT IS CORRECT, AND IT IS ALSO A FACT THAT THE SECRETARY OF STATE WAS IN SUPPORT OF AND IN AGREEMENT WITH THIS STATEMENT.

Q: WHO DRAFTED IT?

Q: DID MR. BRZEZINSKI DRAFT IT?

MR. POWELL: I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW WHERE THE ORIGINAL DRAFT CAME FROM.

Q: JODY, YOU ARE AWARE THAT A NUMBER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS EXPERTS FEEL THAT THIS COURSE OF ACTION ON THE PART OF THE UNITED STATES WILL HAVE THE EFFECT OF TIGHTENING DOWN SOVIET UNION POLICIES TOWARD DISSIDENTS AND MAKE LIFE TOUGHER FOR DISSIDENTS WITHIN THE SOVIET UNION.

TO WHAT EXTENT ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT THAT, AND DO YOU
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HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT THE POSSIBLE NEGATIVE RESULT

OF THIS POLICY?

MR. POWELL: I HATE TO GO BACK TO -- LET ME JUST SAY THAT CLEARLY. LET ME FIRST REFER YOU BACK TO THE COMMENTS I MADE ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE EFFORT HERE AND ITS DURATION AND, SECONDLY, SAY THAT CLEARLY IF WE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT WHAT WE HAVE DONE AND WHAT WE MAY DO IN THE FUTURE WAS NOT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE GOALS THAT WE PRESENTED HERE, WE WOULD NOT DO IT.

I BELIEVE, WITH PARTICULAR REGARD TO ANY POSSIBLE CONNECTION BETWEEN WHAT ACTION IS TAKEN HERE AND THE ACTIONS WITH REGARD TO THE SOVIET DISSIDENTS THAT THEY, WHO SHARE THAT LONG-RANGE GOALS, ARE IN THE BEST POSITION TO SAY WHETHER OR NOT THEY BELIEVE WHAT ACTIONS TAKEN HERE ARE ALSO IN FURTHERANCE OF THAT END.

SO FAR AS I KNOW, I PERHAPS SHOULD NOT VENTURE TO SPEAK FOR THEM. LET ME JUST GO BACK TO THE INITIAL PORTION OF THAT STATEMENT. HARTMAN

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